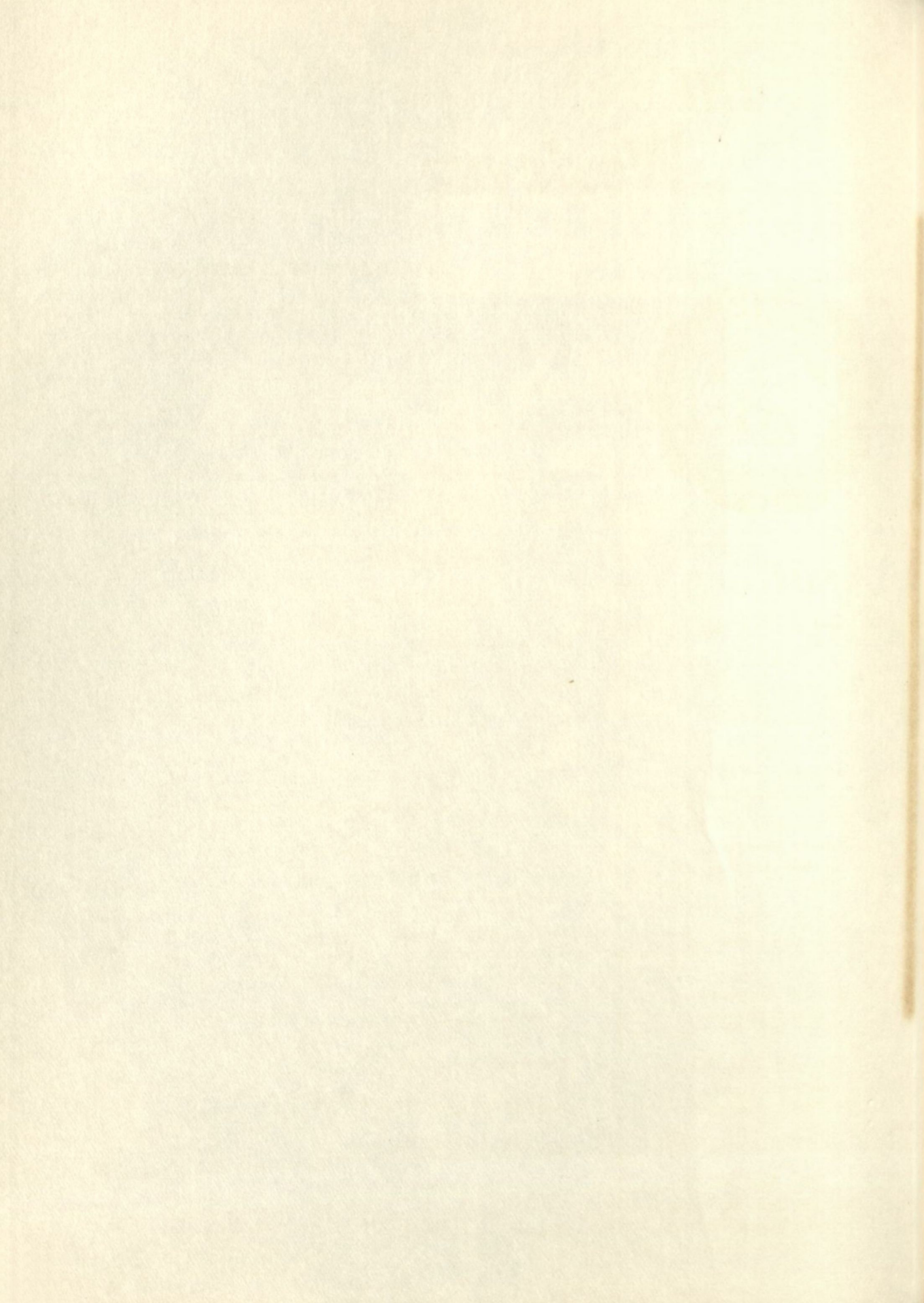




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I remember summers ago

hand in hand
barefoot together
we ran again
down up
hill and
heaven was so low
it tickled our feet
and earth was just—
above our heads,
in beds of briars
Mr. Sandman was stuck,
for us
Life was day long then
(let's go to my house for lunch)
sky high we reached
and Touched!
And tears were absent
but for skinned knees and such
Those were days of
Double-Dare
(what'd you have for dinner?)

—Bebe Ferrell

THE BROWN ENVELOPE

Gertie watched the stranger through the lacy curtains in her kitchen window. He came up the back way, through the swinging gate and up to the back steps. He wore overalls (which were new, she could tell, because of the crease still in the denim), a plaid shirt, and sneakers, which seemed out of place. He also had a bandana around his neck; a good strong one, like a cowboy, Gertie thought. He had a rather lighthearted look on his face, and Gertie thought he must be a tramp looking for some work and a bite to eat. At his knock she opened the door cautiously.

"Ma'am," he said politely, tipping his hat by way of introduction.

"Well, what is it?" demanded Gertie. "I suppose you want food and work."

"Yes'm, I suppose you're just about right, ma'am."

"Well, come on in," invited Gertie. She asked him in grudgingly, though she thought perhaps she had a chance to get more work from than he had bargained for.

It was when the stranger stepped in the door that Gertie noticed that he was holding a smudged brown envelope, which was wrinkled from the pressure and perspiration of his hand.

"What kind of work do you do?" Gertie asked, feeling him out to see how much she could get done.

"Oh, most any kind."

"Sit down and I'll fix you some soup left from supper and a sandwich. Cheese okay?"

"Oh, yes'm."

Gertie lumbered over to the icebox and got out the cup of soup; she stood between the man and the soup and added water to the cup. Now

what would a man like this ordinary hired hand go around carrying an old envelope for, she wondered. It was as if he were guarding its contents; he still held it in his hand.

"Is this place yours, ma'am? You run it by yourself?" the stranger inquired casually, as if simply making conversation.

Gertie was still thinking of the brown envelope. "No," she said absently, "my husband and I do some truck farmin', only he's away for a few days so I'm runnin' things." She spoke rather cautiously and her eyes darted to the pantry where they kept the money. There was over six hundred and . . .

"Farming any good lately?" The stranger's question interrupted Gertie's thoughts. He was not looking directly at her but his eyes glanced about the small kitchen casually.

"Good as usual, I s'pose," answered Gertie. She put the soup and sandwich plate on the table and began thinking about how much work she could get from the stranger. "You ever pick tomatoes?"

"Well, I've picked a fair share of 'em. Yes'm, I guess you'd say I'm pretty fair at it." The stranger ate rather slowly, as if he had all the time in the world. He had put the wrinkled envelope on the edge of the table.

"You can start with that, then." Gertie hoped he'd leave the envelope on the table.

Yes'm," he said, finishing his food. "You just show me where the patch is and I'll start pickin'!"

"It's behind that shed y' passed when y' come in," Gertie directed. She looked at the brown envelope. "Gonna leave that here?"

Yes'm. I'll come back for it." Seeing her obvious curiosity, he added, "A pretty special envelope, that is. It holds the future." With that re-

mark, he picked up his hat from the back of a chair and walked out the door, whistling a little too cheerfully.

"The baskets are in the shed," Gertie called after him.

Gertie turned back to the empty soup bowl and plate, (setting, oh, so near the envelope), picked them up, and began washing them in the sink. Then she went to the pantry to get some canning jars. As she passed the shelf where the little tin box held their money, she thought nervously of the stranger's question about who ran the farm.

Back in the kitchen, Gertie began humming a tuneless tune as she busied herself with tidying up the room. Several times she brushed against the table near the envelope and the thought that she should open it gripped her.

"Oh, don't be weak-minded, Gertie," she told herself. "After all, what's so mysterious about an

old envelope brought here by a tramp?" No matter how much she tried taking her mind off the envelope, her curiosity grew. It began to gnaw at her, loom up before her, to tempt her beyond her point of resisting.

Gertie looked around the room (as if looking for someone who might be watching) and then walked to the table and calmly picked up the envelope. After all, she thought, he'll never know. She drew out an old faded snapshot. There were two people in the picture and she recognized both figures. The woman, who had Gertie's own features, was being choked to death with a bandana by a man in overalls. She covered her open mouth with her hand.

Gertie dropped the picture and turned around. In the doorway was the stranger, twisting the bandana in his hands. The stranger smiled and moved toward Gertie. Gertie screamed.

—Mary Russell

Miss Worry

My name is Miss Worry.

I can worry about anything.

Do anything to worry about.

I am the most talented girl

Anyone knows.

Because I'm Miss Worry.

I know all to worry

About and nothing more.

—Louise Marchman

A tear,
The is-ness of an emotion,
Can come suddenly and unrestrained
to reveal silent secrets of the self
As it splashes.

—Darlene Hassler

When

Leaves crunch underfoot
As I walk in the woods,
Acorns pop like corn,
Leaves scatter about when
blown by a breeze,
And trees look jagged and torn,
I know it's autumn.

—Darlene Hassler

BLACK BONDAGE

His appearance was as sudden as a flash of hot lightning on a hot summer evening, and equally as unexpected. Amos, scrubbing his face and hands at the water basin behind the cabin, felt the presence of someone behind him, but believing the person to be his wife, he did not hurry his actions. However, when he turned around, he saw in the fading twilight the tall, muscular figure of a negro man. As the figure stepped forward into the flickering light of the candle on the bench, Amos noticed the slightly exaggerated limp, the mass of nearly red hair, and the familiar crooked smile, and he knew immediately that the man was his older brother, Luke.

Calmly, but with mixed emotions, Amos embraced his brother. The memory of their parting ten years ago was as vivid as if Luke had left the night before. The still silence of the warm evening, the stars shining softly as they slowly became visible, the lonesome whine of a hungry dog—these things seemed the same this evening as they had been that evening ten long years ago, and Amos' mind was racing as he stood looking at his brother.

"Ah've come t' take ya' back with me, Amos." Luke's voice was deep, and still reminded Amos of thunder rolling across the sky. Disregarding Luke's statement, Amos said, "Ya' kinda' s'prised me, Luke. Ah thought ya' waz Izzy 'til ah turned around an' seen ya' standin' there. Soon as ya' stepped t'ord me ah know'd it was you. Yore leg still givin' ya' trouble? How'd ya' ever git here anyhow? Well, there's no sense in us standin' out here in the dark—come on in, Izzy has supper ready, and she'll be pleased t' see ya'."

As the two men walked around the cabin to the front porch, Amos talked steadily, fearing

Luke would repeat his first statement, and he didn't feel up to arguing with his brother, not right then, at least.

"Izzy's a fine wife, Luke. She cooks as good as Aunt Sally, and she's purty and smart, too. Only thing is she's kinda weak. Had lot o' trouble when Matt came, and since then she's had two miscarriages. Now she's 'spectin' another one, and ah can't help but worry 'bout her. Never complains, though—she does her work with never a word, and always has a smile for me when ah gets home."

The house was full of the aroma of boiling cabbage, and the crackling fire in the soot-covered fireplace added an uncomfortable warmth to the tiny rooms. The main room was a combination living room and kitchen, and although it was sparsely furnished, it was noticeably clean and neat. The two small bedrooms, which opened off the kitchen, were visible from the front room, and Luke could see that Isabel's housekeeping abilities were not limited to caring for the finery in the big house on the hill.

Seven-year-old Matt was seated at the round oak table churning butter and humming a tune which sounded somewhat like "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot." When Amos entered the room, Matt jumped up from the table and ran to hug him, staring all the while at the stranger standing by the door.

"Who's he?" Matt whispered to his father. But Amos had no time to answer, for Isabel had come in from the bedroom and was approaching Luke with a look of pleasant surprise on her tired, drawn face.

"Why, Luke, what a surprise seein' ya' here! We didn't know whether ya' was alive or not, it's

been so long since we last heard from ya'. Set ya'self down—dinner'll be ready in a minute." As she moved across the room to the fireplace, Isabel gave Matt a swat on the seat of his britches and motioned to him to help her with the meal. The first time she'd asked for help in a long time, Amos noted.

Once seated at the table, the adults became engrossed in Luke's account of his adventures of the past ten years, and Matt found himself wondering at the strange new phrases "Promised Land," "All the freedom a man could want," "Be your own boss." What was Uncle Luke talking about? Why did Amos and Isabel have that faraway look in their eyes? Why did this strange forboding suddenly come over him?

As if he sensed Matt's uneasiness and lack of understanding, Luke turned to the boy and asked, "Matt, how'd ya' like t' live on a farm your pa owned, and not have t' account t' a white master?" Matt, picturing himself free to hunt and fish and play whenever he wished, thought it would be the greatest thing in the world, and said so. But then came the inevitable question, "But how come ya' asked me that?"

"'Cause," Luke said, "if your pa decides t' go back t' Canada with me, that's the way things will be."

Matt's excitement was so much that Isabel told him to go over to Aunt Sally's and stop acting like a wild Indian. "Mercy, chile, ya'd think ya' was borned and raised with the Apaches! Tell Aunt Sally you's gonna' stay the night with her, 'cause your pa and Uncle Luke have a heap o' talkin' t' do. Run along now, an' min' you's a good boy."

With a loud hoop, Matt ran out the front door, only to stick his head back around the corner and scream, "Pa, let's go with Uncle Luke—tomorrow!"

As Isabel cleared the table and washed the dishes, Luke and Amos sat on the front porch and talked. They could see the lights in the surrounding cabins, and the muted cries of the negro children playing hide-and-seek drifted to them across the cool night air. Up on the hill, the big house was aglow with light, and the two men could see the moon rising above the tall brick chimney. Amos was proud that his master, Dudley Chandler, was a good man who dealt fairly with his slaves. And Mrs. Chandler—why, in all the years Isabel had been her personal servant, Mrs. Chandler had never said an ugly word to her. She was a nice woman, all right.

"We got a good life here, Luke. Ah jus' don' know what's the best thing t' do. Sure, ah don't believe God meant for any man t' serve another, but a run fer freedom would be mighty risky right now seein' as how Izzy's 'spectin', an' she's so weak anyway. Matt could make the trip, that ah knows, but what would happen to 'em if ah was killed? How would they live? Our life here at Hungry Hill's right good—least we got food every day, an' clothes t' put on our backs, an' a house t' live in. The Chandlers is good folks—they ain't never been mean t' Izzy an' me, an' they's always askin' how Matt is. The trip'd be mighty hard, and ah'm nearly as scared o' it now as ah was ten years ago. You'll have t' give me time t' think about it, Luke, you'll have t' give me time."

Apparently Amos was ready to let the matter drop, so Luke mumbled, "Okay, Amos. Jus' don' be too long in decidin'. It could mean a life o' freedom fer ya'll—a life bettr'n ya' could ever dream of—a free life."

There the conversation ended. Amos went inside the cabin to help Isabel, while Luke remained on the porch, absorbed in memories of a night ten years before. He could still see Amos crouched beside the rotted stump whispering, "No, Luke! Ah'm scared—damn scared! We'll get caught sure's the world, and one o' us will be shot, jus' like *you* was las' year. Ah tell ya', ah ain't goin'!" And his own deep voice pleading, "Come on, Amos—we gotta' run, *right now*! It's a sure thing this time—no way t' get caught! Jus' over that ridge yonder—jus' t' Doc Wilson's. Now come on!" But as Luke had reached out to grab Amos' arm, the younger brother had turned and sped back across the field. Luke could still hear Amos' running steps, and he could hear his own heavy panting as he reached the top of the ridge and looked back, for the last time, on his home of bondage.

Ah, that was long ago, long ago, but it was obvious that Amos was still afraid of the risk. Well, he'd give him a week to decide—then he'd go back to Canada, satisfied that he had at least tried to free his brother.

In the bedroom, Isabel was sitting on the bed, her eyes following Amos as he paced around the room. "Now, Amos, don' worry ya'self so. It wasn't a bad fall—ya' can plainly see ah didn't break no bones. Jus' a slip on the stairs, like Matt does sometimes when he's in a big hurry. An' Mizz Chandler, she let me rest a while, even. Ah'm fine, an' . . ."

(Continued on page nine)



MOOD

—Sharon Harp

BLACK BONDAGE

(Continued from page seven)

"But Matt's a young boy! He can stand t' fall down, an' you can't! Oh, Izzy, ah wants ya' t' be okay, an' have this baby okay, but ya' seems so tired o' late, and ah can't help but worry. Mebbe ya' oughta' ask Mizz Chandler if ya' can stop work 'til after it's borned—ya' needs t' rest." Walking over to the bed, Amos took his wife's hand, then sat down beside her.

"The baby's jus' five months, Amos, and who'd work for Mizz Chandler? Ah tell ya' ah'm all right, an' ah can work as good as ah ever did. Now go on t' sleep, and don' worry. Ya' got enough t' think about now that Luke wants an answer, and ya' needn't worry about me." As she crawled into bed, Isabel noticed the slump of Amos' shoulders. "He's so worried," she thought. "Ah jus' can't tell him about the pain—ah'll jus' have to wait 'til he decides whether or not t' go with Luke. It should all be over by the end o' the week—then he'll have only hisself and strong, young Matt t' think of. How ah loves 'em both! Dear Lord, you've been so good t' me these years, and you've watched over us the whole time. Please, ah feels that you're gonna' take me pretty soon, an' ah'll be pleased t' come live with ya', Lord, only please, take good care o' Amos and Matt. Help them understand, Dear Lord, and help them get free."

Amos could tell by Isabel's spaced breathing that she was asleep. His head was full as he looked at his small wife whose face, in sleep, was peaceful, and not drawn with lines of pain and fatigue. Their eight years together had been good years, although the two miscarriages had added a good bit of heartache to their meagre but happy lives. Could Izzy make the trip to Canada? Would it be fair to risk her life, as well as young Matt's to reach freedom? They both deserved a better life—no man ought to serve another. Luke knew where they could live, and his tales of life in Canada seemed too good to be true. If they could travel without fear! Why did white folks insist on punishing Negroes who merely wanted to be free, as all men should be? "They ain't all like Mr. and Mizz Chandler," Amos muttered to himself. "No sir, they ain't. They's fine folks. Why, they've let me an' Izzy work around the house 'stead o' puttin' us in the fields. But still, it ain't right fer us t' have 't account t' a master. Our onliest master's God, and He don' require slavery. Oh, Izzy, if only ya' was strong enough we'd make a run, an' by jingo, we'd live us a fancy life in Canada!"

Isabel sighed, and Amos realized he had been talking aloud as he undressed. His mind was in a whirl as he stretched out beside his wife and watched the clouds float across the moon. What would happen in the next few days? Luke had to know his decision soon—what would it be? These questions repeated themselves over and over as Amos dropped off into a deep sleep.

Luke, only half-asleep in Matt's room, was the first one to hear the sound. It was the soft shuffle of feet, accompanied by labored breathing. Who was in the main room? Someone who had seen him slip across the back field and had come to kill him so as to collect the coveted \$500 reward? Maybe it was Matt, grown restless and wanting his mother. Surely it wasn't Amos, pacing the floor, wrestling with his conscience? No, the steps were too light to be those of a man. Wait—that was a moan—and there it is again—soft, repressed, yet full of heart-rending agony. Moving quietly, Luke slipped into his trousers and crossed the bedroom to the doorway. His eyes had grown accustomed to the darkness, so he had no trouble recognizing Isabel kneeling by the table. Luke ran noiselessly across the large room and gathered her in his arms. "Isabel," he whispered, "Isabel, what's wrong?"

"Amos," she murmured, "Oh, Amos, help me! The baby—oh, the pain is so bad!"

"Isabel, it's me, Luke. What can ah do?"

Isabel clutched his arm and gasped, "Amos, please don' let me die! Oh God, ah hurts so! Help me, Amos, help me!"

Luke picked her up gently and took her into Matt's room, where he laid her carefully on the bed. Then he ran to get Amos.

Although in a sleepy stupor, Amos detected the anxiety in Luke's voice. "Quick, Amos! It's Isabel. She's callin' fer ya'. Hurry, man! Ah put her in Matt's bed."

Amos ran numbly through the house and knelt by his wife who was writhing with pain. "Izzy, can ya' heah me? It's me, Amos. What can ah do, Izzy? Tell me quick!" Isabel's breathing was painfully labored, and the two men could see her dark lips forming the words she was struggling to say. "Amos, the pain—the child—ah—when ah fell—oh, God, ah don' wants to die! Ah feels it, though—Amos!"

Dazedly Amos told Luke to go get Aunt Sally. "But don' let the boy know—don' tell Matt."

The spirit of death hung heavy in the room as Isabel strained wearily to make her words intelligible. "Amos, take Matt—take him away—let him live free. Don' wait . . ."

Luke and Aunt Sally found Amos leaning across the bed, his arms around his wife, his eyes wide in a glassy stare. Isabel was dead.

The funeral was held the following evening. The cemetery was in a peaceful valley about two miles from the plantation. In spite of the distance, all the Negro workers, as well as Mr. and Mrs. Chandler, traveled the dusty road to pay homage to the kind, patient woman who had died so bravely. Luke, standing uneasily at the back of the group of Negroes, watched his brother's contorted face grow pale as Isabel's body was lowered into the flower-edged grave, and he heard Matt's innocent question, "Pa, will she be warm enough?" The child didn't understand what had happened to his mother, but as the folks moved away after the final prayer, he tried to explain it very matter-of-factly to his cousin: "Ya' see, Will, Ma has gone t' live with God where she'll be free, and she's gonna' help Pa and me be free, too, Pa said she was. Ah sho' wish she wasn't gone, though—ah miss her awful much already." But Pa told him to be a man and not cry, because Ma was safe with God, and she was watching them from the sky, so Matt blinked back the tears that threatened to roll down his cheeks, and held his pa's hand tighter.

The moon was rising as Amos and Luke walked back to the dark cabin. Matt had gone home with Aunt Sally. Luke, fearing the recognition of Mr. Chandler, had slipped into the woods until everyone had left the cemetery. When the cemetery was cleared, he had sat quietly next to his brother until Amos had decided to leave his wife's grave. The two men walked along the dark road in silence. Finally Amos spoke. "Luke, Izzy's las' words was tellin' me t' take Matt t' freedom."

"Ah know, Amos. Ya' tole me."

"Well, ah've done lots o' thinkin' about what she said, but ah jus' can't decide what t' do. Ah know you's got t' know real soon, and ah does want t' decide yea or nay so's Matt an' ah can start our lives agin. But ah swear, Luke ah can't seem t' think clear—mah mind's too fogged up. Tomorrow ah'll tell you, yes suh' tomorrow ah'll let ya' know what we's gonna' do."

"Don' hurry ya'self, Amos. Ain't no hurry. Jus' ya' take it easy fer a while. Aunt Sallie can take care o' Matt fer a few days, and ya' can tell me soon as ya' have time t' think it over."

As the two brothers entered the still cabin, each knew well what Amos' decision would be, and the night passed slowly for both of them.

The stars were disappearing quickly as the first rays of sun pushed them under the horizon. As if by mental telepathy, Amos and Luke got dressed and walked into the main room at the same time.

Luke, looking up from the fire he had just lit in the fireplace, watched his brother as he moved around the kitchen. There was a firm determination in Amos' steps, and a strangely stubborn gleam in his eye. "Yep," Luke thought, "he'll tell me this mornin'. It's a good thing ah didn't bring no clothes, 'cause there won' be no time wasted by packin'."

Aunt Sally and other neighbors had brought plenty of food to the cabin, so the two men sat down to a breakfast of warm biscuits, ham, and milk. Neither one had much to say except that the day was "gonna' be mighty hot." Luke ate heartily, while Amos scarcely noticed what was on his plate.

"Ah've got t' be goin' soon as ah finish Amos. The trip will take nearly a week, an' ah has t' be gettin' back t' mah work."

"Ya' knows what ah've decided?" asked Amos incredulously.

"Ah guess ah 'spected it soon's ah got here and saw Isabel's condition. But now Izzy's free, an' ah knows, too, that ya' don, want t' risk the boy's life by takin' him such a long ways with slave-catchers all along." Pushing back his chair, Luke got up from the table and walked over to Amos. "Brother, ah knows ya' pretty well, an' ah knows ya' won' suffer this bondage much longer. Ah understands, Amos."

The tears Amos had been pushing back began to stream down his impassive face as he stood and embraced his brother. The two walked around to the back of the cabin and shook hands in parting. Amos still had not spoken, but as his brother walked rapidly across the brightening field, he called, "We'll be there, Luke! Jus a few years an' we'll be there!" Luke turned and waved in answer.

"Dear Lord," Amos prayed, "give us another time, Lord, when the boy's older. Give us another chance, Lord, so's we can be free as we ought." Walking up the road to Aunt Sally's, Amos knew that someday he and his son would live in freedom, for God meant no man to serve another. His hands were trembling as he approached the cabin and called his son's name.

—Jo Bogan

PENANCE

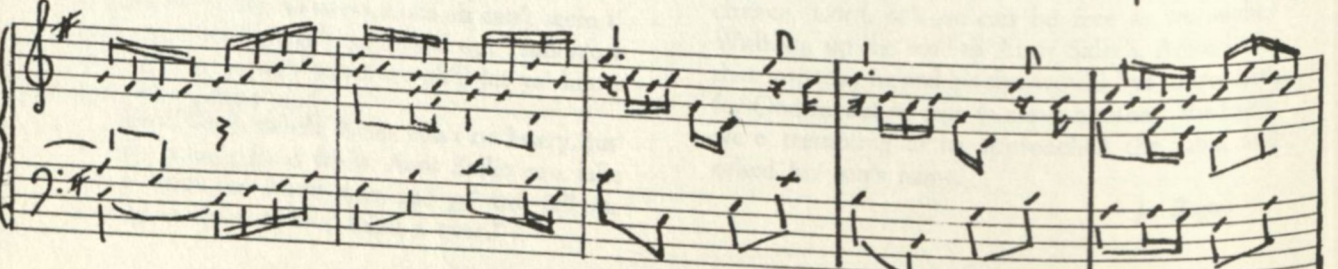
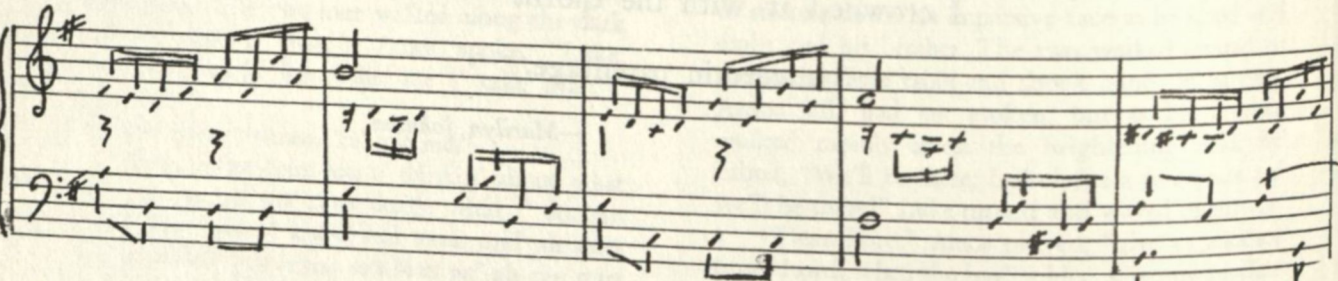
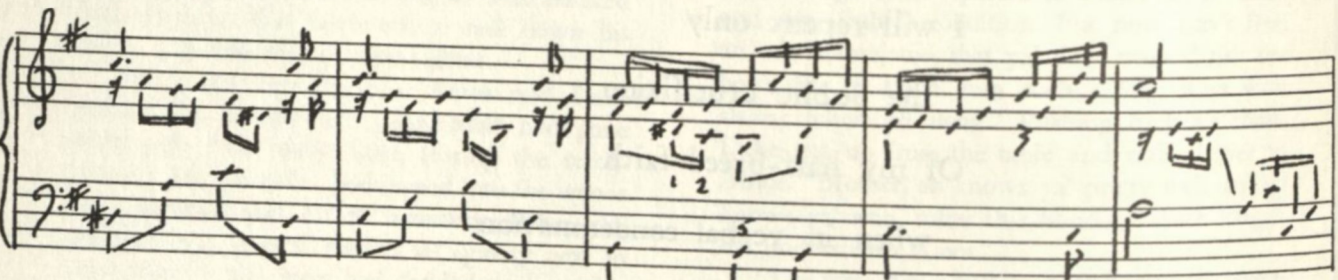
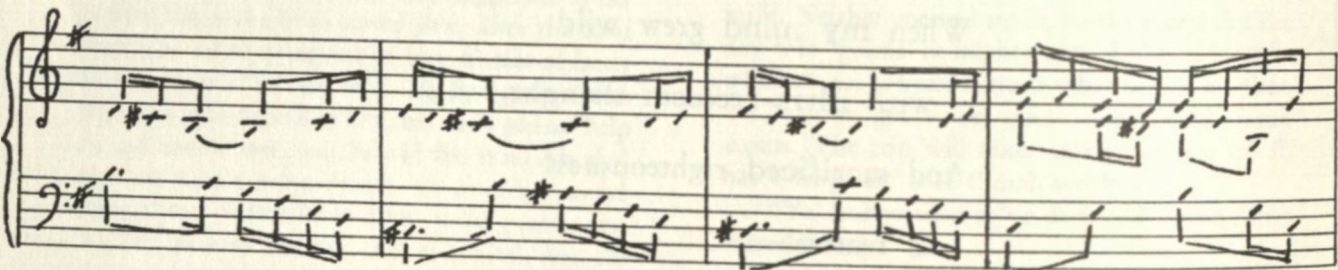
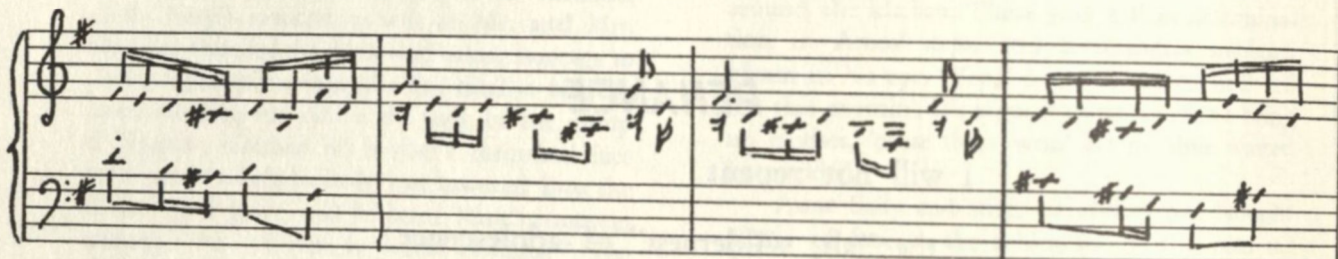
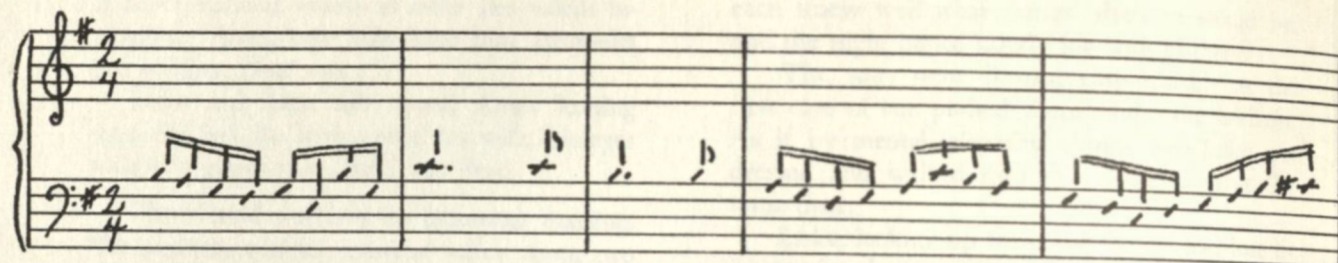
I will not repent
the "ah, wilderness" of adolescence
When my mind grew wild
with ultra-freedom thought
And sacrificed righteousness
to reason.

I will repent only
the public crucifixion
Of my half-breed faith
when in verbal condemnation
I crowned it with the thorns
of its uncertain parentage.

—Marilyn Johnson

FUGUE II

FRANCES WHITE



A handwritten musical score for the song 'The Rose Tree'. The score is written on two staves, a treble staff and a bass staff, both with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody is written in the treble staff, and the bass line is in the bass staff. The music is in 4/4 time. The first staff contains four measures of music. The second staff contains four measures of music. The third staff contains four measures of music. The fourth staff contains four measures of music. The music is written in a simple, handwritten style. The notes are mostly eighth and sixteenth notes, with some rests. The bass line consists of simple chords and single notes. The overall style is that of a personal musical sketch or a simple arrangement for a song.

A handwritten musical score for the song "The Rose Tree". The score is written on two staves, Treble and Bass, in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time. The melody is in the Treble staff, and the accompaniment is in the Bass staff. The piece consists of four measures. The first measure shows the beginning of the melody and bass line. The second measure continues the melody and bass line. The third measure continues the melody and bass line. The fourth measure shows the end of the melody and bass line, with a final chord in the bass staff.

A handwritten musical score for the song 'The Rose Tree'. The score is written on two staves, a treble staff and a bass staff, both with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). The melody is written in the treble staff, and the accompaniment is in the bass staff. The music is divided into four measures. The first measure shows the beginning of the melody and a simple bass accompaniment. The second measure continues the melody with some grace notes and a more active bass line. The third measure features a more complex melody with many beamed notes and a bass line with a long note. The fourth measure concludes the phrase with a final melody note and a sustained bass note. The handwriting is in ink on aged paper.

A handwritten musical score for the song 'The Rose Tree'. The score is written on two staves, a treble staff and a bass staff, both with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The treble staff begins with a treble clef and a sharp sign. The bass staff begins with a bass clef and a sharp sign. The music is written in a simple, handwritten style. The treble staff contains a series of notes, some beamed together, and a few accidentals. The bass staff contains a series of notes, some beamed together, and a few accidentals. The score is divided into measures by vertical bar lines. The handwriting is in dark ink on a light-colored background.

A handwritten musical score for the song "The Rose Tree". The score is written on a five-line staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody is written in the upper voice, and the accompaniment is written in the lower voice. The music is in 4/4 time. The lyrics are written below the staff, aligned with the notes. The score consists of 16 measures, with a repeat sign at the beginning and a double bar line at the end. The handwriting is in ink on aged paper.

Handwritten musical score for 'The Rose Tree'. The score is written on a grand staff with a treble and bass clef. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The melody is in the treble clef, and the bass line is in the bass clef. The music is in 2/4 time. The score consists of six measures. The first measure has a '17' written below the bass line. The second measure has a '18' written below the bass line. The third measure has a '19' written below the bass line. The fourth measure has a '20' written below the bass line. The fifth measure has a '21' written below the bass line. The sixth measure has a '22' written below the bass line. The score is written on a piece of paper with a dashed line at the bottom.

Night

Almost within reach
A luminous opal, set in midnight blue velvet,
Sifting diamonds down onto the waves
That gently caress the slippery shore,
And bathe the ghostly, ever-shifting dunes.
The soft, rustling winds
Whisper through the leafy fingers of palm,
Crooning a lullaby to the gulls and pipers,
And the lonely girl who share
A deserted beach at midnight.

—Betsy Felkel

Halloween Fire and Stubbornness

I sat beside
a crackling fire of Halloween orange
And listened
to the restless wind outside tugging,
trying to loosen stubborn leaves from
almost bare trees.

Then
a log snapped and fell. The Halloween
fire was almost dead. The crackling
gaiety of existence was gone.

But
the leaves still clung to
almost bare trees.

—Darlene Hassler

RIDDLES WRYLY EXPOUNDED

1. To suffer the measured thread of men is my daily portion. In the rage of battle or the halls of pleasure I must bear the burden. I am lonely, but not alone, for my companions are the soles of men who bruise and tear me in their hurry through life's journey. My colors, though bright with vanity, are often cleansed and purified. I bleed, and my shape becomes as nothing.

3. I lurk among the dusty shadows of places forsaken by men. I only behold that which is unwanted by humanity or that which is hollow of substance and meaning. The lowest creatures of value tread upon me; my head is severed by the blackened hands of toil. My very being is often foul and murky; often it is a vast nothingness.

5. I am rich and tall and splendid. I am most coveted by the innocent, most feared by the weak, and most hated by the expanse and weight of the world. My towering magnificence is like unto the pleasures of spring, bathed in the ardor of roses and honeysuckle. My legions are numberless, but even they are impotent against my inevitable doom. I perish beneath the pearl-encrusted caverns of unresisting spirits.

2. My life is a whirling web of threads which entangle and consume my being in the misty folds of night. I am pierced with sharpest swords and crushed between leaden bars, but my cries go untended. My wounded body, once offered to Beauty, is laid among the potions and powders of the devil.

4. I am the executioner of knowledge and peace, by my hands the minds of men are shattered and destroyed; the tranquility of mankind is mutilated forever. I am the hope of the hopeless, but the burden of those who long for eternity. At my will the classes of man are moved, the dead are awakened, the living rewarded. I am forever present in the souls of those who hunger and thirst.

6. A great tree is gashed; its bark tattered; its life oozes forth. Men claim it and send it forth on its journey to humanity. It becomes a balm for tortured nerves, a symbol for rebellious youth. Through it words of great wisdom dimly pass; speech of lesser consequence is freed slowly. Air surrounds and fills it; its importance puffs it up; its ambitions are destroyed in a breath.

Answers

1. a rock
2. a hair roller
3. a trash can
4. the buzzer
5. a chocolate cake
6. bubble gum

—Kathy Williams



LIFE

—Joan Davidson

I HATE THE WORLD, BUT I LOVE THE EARTH

It was a crisp Sunday afternoon during the Christmas holidays as we drove toward Aunt May Belle's farm. The grading highway rolled under us, and the dry grass bowed as we passed. In the distance an orchard of leafless pecan trees made a lonely pattern against the sky. Soon an old country house would come into view between the trees. Mama, my brother, and I used to try to see who could spot the house first. In the winter the game was not as great a challenge as it had been in the springtime when the leaves hid the house until its half-painted form loomed in front of us. Today we did not play because we could see the house a mile down the road.

We turned off the highway and into the overgrown driveway. You could see that this had once been a beautiful place with artfully landscaped gardens surrounding the house. I knew the house itself had been made from the timber off the farm and was supported on a foundation of sun-baked brick. In each room, I remembered, was a fireplace with black andirons forged by slave labor. This house had seen generations come and go, and I felt it was now watching the last one. Even the windows, stuffed with newspapers to keep the wind from whistling through the broken glass, had a certain sagging look about them.

Blow the horn, Richard," Mama said. "You know how deaf Aunt May Belle is."

We climbed out of the car and stretched our legs while we waited for Aunt May Belle to come to the door. I noticed many of the plants had disappeared from the gardens. Aunt May Belle took great pleasure in giving away everything she had except a few bare essentials. I'm sure no one ever left empty-handed—at least we never did.

The stooped figure of a decrepit old woman came to the door. Her smile revealed a front expanse of toothless gums. She wore her usual outfit—a navy blue skirt and a white muslin top with a heavy blue sweater. Her skinny legs were covered by a pair of thick stockings, and on her feet were

a pair of shiny loafers. A paper sack was rolled on the edges to fit snugly over her white head. Bits of unkempt hair curled out around her ears. Mama had sent her a hat once, but she gave it away because it was not becoming.

"Hello, Aunt May Belle."

"Hello, Frances. I'm glad you and the children could come. You go on upstairs to my room and pull the chairs up around the fire. I'll be up shortly. You know how slow I have to go because of my arthritis. It certainly is bad now."

We climbed the steps to her room. As painfully ridden with arthritis as she was, Aunt May Belle insisted on keeping her upstairs room because she loved the view. I listened to her groan aloud as she inched her way up the stairs, pulling her stiff leg up behind her other one. She sounded like a martyr on the cross. Being deaf and having no one around most of the time made her insensitive, I suppose, to the unearthly sounds she made.

The upstairs room had a peculiar smell that was rather nauseous until you got used to it. It was like the smell of a sick person's room when it had not been properly cleaned. I had an idea the smell originated with one of Aunt May Belle's cats. As I pulled one of the small folding chairs close to the fire, I glanced back toward the door in time to see a black cat slither out a small hole in the wall. Aunt May Belle preferred to build a fire because she could not regulate the heater.

"No, you take the rocking chair, Richard. I have to have a straight chair for my back. Unnhh! There now, let me turn so I can see your faces. My hearing keeps getting worse. Can't hear out of my left ear at all. The man down the road gave me a new battery for my hearing aid, but I still don't hear. I'm going to send this one back, too; it's no better than the other one."

Yes, she would send this hearing aid back just as she had sent back her false teeth. She always sent back everything mechanical that she ever bought. How could she expect things to work

right when she never followed the directions?

"Aunt May Belle," Mama began, "We brought you some oranges . . . Brought you some oranges . . . Oranges," Mama said in a loud and exaggerated voice.

"Oranges, you say. Well, put them in the kitchen. I do appreciate that. I eat a great deal of fruit—fruit and my special chocolate drink."

Ugh! I had heard all about that chocolate drink. It was made with canned milk, brown sugar, crushed fruit, and I-don't-know-what-else. I never heard her mention any chocolate that went into the concoction.

"I never eat meats of any kind," she continued in her dramatic voice "I could no more eat an animal than a human. The animals kill each other because they are cursed. Someday God's kingdom will prevail, and the lion will eat hay with the lamb. Brother and I are some of the select few who understand God's plan. When Christ comes again we will all be resurrected from the dead. The last to die shall be the first to be resurrected, and it will roll back to Adam. But some will be missing when the roll is called, and people will ask, 'Where is Miss May Belle Bush?' and they will answer, 'Why she is in heaven on the right hand of God.' Only the selected few will be in heaven."

I looked at Mama and saw she was getting tense. Tonight she would probably have to take a tranquilizer to go to sleep. Aunt May Belle always affected her that way. I remember Mama talking about how she battled Aunt May Belle's philosophy as she grew up. Richard and I had never been under her influence, and we could enjoy the dramatic presentation of her convictions.

"Aunt May Belle, how was the pecan crop this year?" This was Mama's attempt to change the subject.

"Now you see, Frances, I couldn't hear you. You talk too fast and too high. I can hear some people, but I never can hear you. I remember you always did have a high voice. You were good in math, and I was not. I remember Brother throwing the book down in disgust when he tried to explain

math to me." She gave a weak laugh. Before Mama could speak, Aunt May Belle had continued. "Some people are good in one thing and some in another. Brother once had my head phrenologized. The man said I would make a good landscape gardner, orator, artist, or architect."

These things were shockly true. She was the one who had landscaped the six acres surrounding the house. She had graduated from the Emerson School of Oratory in Boston, where she had played the role of Hamlet at the graduation exercises. She had also painted a beautiful set of china and had done oil paintings of landscapes. Her ability to quote poetry had made a permanent impression on me. She could quote Tennyson with such feeling that the pure emotion of it would make tears well up in my eyes. The phrenologist seemed to have missed her ability to analyze the affairs of the world as a part of God's plan.

"I have a great deal of time by myself," she mused. "I sit and look at the cars speeding by on the highway and think, 'these are the flaming chariots the prophets of the Bible predicted.' They go so fast it frightens me. The whole world moves at this fast pace. This means only that the kingdom of God is nearing fast. The world shall be destroyed! The atomic bomb will perhaps destroy it. The world is evil, but the Earth is good. I hate the world, but I love the Earth! The world shall be destroyed, but the Earth abideth forever! If our leaders understood God's plan as I do, there would be no integration problem. When God's kingdom has come, the curse of the black people will be lifted, and we shall all be white. Yes, and the dead will be resurrected, and we shall live in peace on Earth."

"It is getting late. I expect we had better go so that we can get home before dark."

All right. Before you go, Frances, let me give you some copies of *Dawn Magazine*. It is the only magazine that tells us the truth. You know the church is evil. That is why I got out. It is just a social club. Oh, and don't forget to take the bushel of pecans I put out for you."

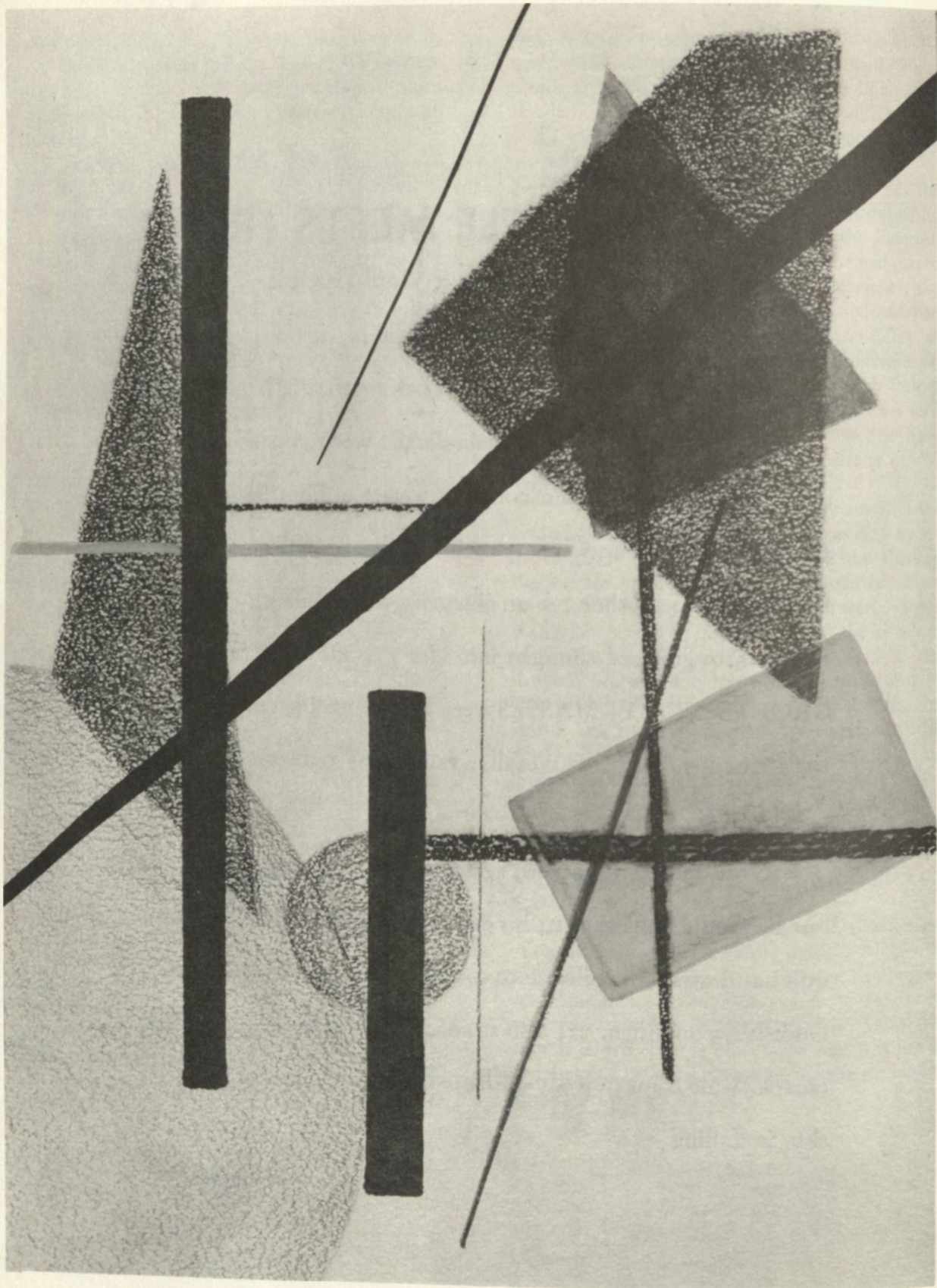
CHICKEN LITTLE MEETS FREUD

Now and then, yet also again it Would happen . . . Zeus commanded it; and Bacchus would cease his jovial games to watch it . . . even he, belowthegods, foresaw that it Would happen.

Now and then, yet also again details were impossible . . . chaos was just-around-the-corner as were the Four Seasons . . . and Christmas . . . and Lowrenstein's Delicatessen; objects faded one into another . . . an obscurity of branch into leaf . . . flower into grass, of thought into idea . . . idea into fantasy. GROUPSCLUSTERMASSSES were perceived. He saw the sky . . . the firmament . . . the Overall, a fanfare of reds spread without a Prism.

Now and then, yet also again his gut was twistedandturned but he would Not scream; his defiance was silence. He waited quiet and afraid . . . silence to comfort him, fear to comfort God. Now and then, yet also again, perhaps this time sometime escape Wuld come quickly-in-haste before now as then the sky is falling.

—Linda Carter



ART PLATE

—Dale Pearson

THE EDUCATION

The chic young woman stepped crisply out of the clean glass store front and entered the mainstream going God-knows-where on a city's busy lunch-hour. The booming of some lofty clock interrupted and was muted by the roar of the human machine. No one needed to know it was 12:00 noon; no one even cared, for that matter—right now the sole concern of a million or so New Yorkers was a destination, a rendezvous and luncheon; quick, efficient, on schedule.

Sandy was swallowed up instantly by the lion's mouth of humanity, and once engulfed, spent several uneasy seconds deciding just which way she was flowing in that vast, teeming river. She caught sight of a grimy alcove leading down to a below-the-street level which didn't appear particularly affected by the onslaught and ducked in to scan a street map.

Then suddenly a miracle occurred: "Sandy gal! How in the world are you, you old Southern belle?" It was like a volcano erupting beneath her, just as warm and twice as exuberant. Sandy whirled, stunned, to confront the first familiar face that was actually unreservedly friendly that she'd encountered in her two-and-a-half weeks of wandering wonder-eyed around Manhattan and vicinity. Diane was beaming up from three steps below and stood there grinning like an excited school-girl at the bewildered expression that gradually changed to excited, apprehensive recognition. The two girls had gone to Schaffer College together and had been especially good pals one semester Sandy's junior year. As far as she'd known, Diane, who had graduated after that term, had gone back to the City which had been her home to pursue what

always promised to be a brilliant career in journalism.

"Diane Bickford! What the devil are you doing, shooting up out of the side-walk like that!"

"Just coming from seeing a guy about a magazine article—but you're the one who's not supposed to be here! Southern gal, what are you doing right here in the middle of the Big Yankee City?"

Sandy wasn't quite sure she knew how to answer that one. Just because she'd graduated from college now and wanted to learn all she could from the School of Humanity? Because there was no place for her back home and she was hungry to see and experience the other sides of life? Because she wanted to lose her identity as other young intellectuals were doing and build some great new artists' dream from nothing? All of these a little bit, she guessed, but you couldn't say it that simply—it went deeper, got all tangled up with the things she thought about and felt inside. All Sandy's life she'd been looking for something really big to come along and put the truth on her. Especially in the last years at college had this youthful search for beauty, truth, and meaning been gathering in momentum. Sandy's literary mind pictured herself as sitting on the precipice of an abyss of vast discontent. She guessed that abyss was Youth and she was impatient to fill it with experience. How're you supposed to tell a character like Diane all that right here in this damn crowded sidewalk? Sure, more than likely *she'd* understand, but . . .

"Well, it's kind of a long story, I guess, Diane. Look, what . . . ?"

"Just what I was gonna say! Nope, haven't had lunch yet, or breakfast either, for that matter. Let's go someplace and grab a bite—we've got lotsa catchin' up to do."

The two young women wriggled out of the immediate radius of the alcove where their encounter had occurred and began their struggle with the rest of mankind down Fifth Avenue. The swill washed them past an Automat that could literally hold no other human form. Diane elbowed Sandy and indicated her desire to cross the street, in the meantime shrieking, "I know of a neat Italian place over on Forty-Seventh a couple of blocks west of here. Let's head there—it should be quieter if you like guiny food."

They twisted and pawed their way, Sandy fairly trotting along when an opening occurred to keep up with Diane whose trail-blazing skill showed she was an old hand at the ordeal. Sandy had been in New York just long enough to finally have grown accustomed to seeing the huge human machine moving along like so many automatons, expressionless and oblivious of their comrades. At first this phenomenon had been the most alien aspect of her loneliness there—enormously unlike the young Southern metropolis not far from her hometown where it was still considered proper to excuse oneself for stepping on another's toes when on a city train or bus. On the subways Sandy soon learned it was not only unheard-of but impossible to expect to be treated with the same polite chivalry of her provincial heritage.

After ten minutes or so of endless struggle, Diane ducked into a quaint little doorway which proved to be the entrance to the source of a succulent, spicy odor of cheeses and tomato sauces, salad oils and mellow black olives, lusty wines mirroring candlelike warmth, the musty, ticklish scent of pastas crisping in the great ovens flashed momentarily with the swinging kitchen door way at the back of the narrow passage of muffled restaurant noises. A jolly young Italian greeted Diane and showed them to a small checker-clad table midway down one of the walls. The young guests related their desires brokenly: "Pizza, this one; and a glass of wine—see, right here. . ." returned the menu to the swarthy little waiter, and settled themselves for the first time since their encounter to a chance at normal conversation.

"Let's see, now—seems you were about to clue me in on how the devil you got here. Gosh, Sandy, I just can't believe it's really you, here!"

"Yea, well, graduated in June, you know, and spent a couple of weeks around home trying to decide what to do with myself—funniest thing, isn't it, how folks just assume 'cause you've got a

piece o' sheepskin with your handle on it your life's all figured out for you. Well mine's not, Diane. Guess I'd just sorta thought it would be, too, and that's why I didn't worry much in college. You know ol' Doc Graves always wanted me to get right into grad school, but that sounded too easy for me; nope, I had some livin' to do first an' I was pretty darn sure I couldn't do it back home. When Doug wanted to get married last year I just couldn't stand the idea of settling down right away and all. So where's the first place a restless Lt. major from down there thinks of coming to learn about The Scene? You know, Diane—you heard it a thousand times yourself back at college—so here I am."

"Got a job, Sandy?"

"Well—Dad lent me a little wad to get goin' on once I convinced him I was coming and it's. . . the landlord gets the rest Monday. I haven't found—well gosh, Diane, it's just so great to see another human being who just might give a damn! You're looking great, and I just love your hair that way! But here I am unloading all over the place. Naw, some fellow down at McGraw-Hill told me to come back next week and that was last Monday; I just did and he said he never saw me before. I just left Scribner's when I met you; they want to talk with me for the third time, but how'm I to know it won't be the same old story? They said something about not really needing any more females right now. Oh, that's not all I've tried—even ready to ask Schrafft's if I can waitress for them! Really Diane, it seems so stupid to come all the way up here and not even find a job in my field—folks back home'll never understand; it was bad enough, my coming alone to start with. I don't know a single soul on this whole blasted rock and a girl just can't get along in the Big Wide World without pull!"

Diane was sitting during this whole desperate outburst, her eyes absorbing Sandy and her mind trying to relate the girlish visage of disillusionment across from her with the exhilarating young intellect that had been just about her closest friend one year back at Schaffer. What did she know about Sandy's situation now? She'd never known what it was to be alone and broke in New York City. This town was home for her and her trail in journalism and society was blazed already by people she'd known since she was a little girl. A name like her dad's stuck around places like the Times Building, and even if he had been dead a lot of years her mom still had a bank account that made

her confident she'd never be hurting. Those four years in the South had been interesting, but the distance of the whole experience almost amused her now. Seeing Sandy back there on the Avenue had excited a tinge of nostalgia for those jolly, bitter-sweet growing pains of years and friendships, parties, blind dates, and term papers, jam-sessions and hours of poring over some smidgen of new thought or discovery, or how to make a new hair-do turn out just right. She'd had some mistaken notion they could go and eat, have a cocktail or two and talk about Salinger and Life and Schaffers' new faculty last fall. She knew better now, looking at the enormous chasm which split that narrow table-cloth in two, the gulf in time and space that nobody could span. Diane liked her life now, for what it promised to become; it hurt just a little to find out you couldn't go back and she resented Sandy for telling her this way, but she wouldn't thwart Time's river for the world!

They'd been served by now and were busily manipulating the wax-like cheese, hungrily mumbling superficial phrases in between mouthfuls. Sandy sat there munching and half-scowling to herself. The apparent coldness in Diane's attitude was beginning to seep through to her through the periphery of self pity and excitement of no longer being alone. There was something there that she could sense; Diane had always been about the most genuinely concerned friend when someone needed one that she could remember. Back at school they'd always found time to listen sympathetically when one of them needed a sounding-board. Sandy had been dazedly excited all the way over after their encounter; just the thought of a familiar face in all these masses! Then she knew too that Diane knew a little about who to see in New York; it had occurred to her that her old pal might have some leads for her. Now that she regarded the sophisticated individual across from her, the idea of receiving sympathy and assistance from an old friend here seemed strangely foreign, something she was silly to have considered. How could she have ever expected to meet somebody in this vast lost city who gave a good damn! Maybe she just ought to get on the next train South and forget all this ridiculous ideal of starting off a romantically Wolfean existence in the flesh-pots of experience. But she couldn't go back there! Even now, just less than a month away from home, she knew for sure what it was she'd been wrestling with all through college about her home town—she wasn't a part of it anymore, didn't want to be, would like to look

back and see it from the eyes of a school-girl or a dreamy teen-ager, but that was all gone; and she knew it now; and the lostness of the thought was a cold, bitter emptiness that could never be filled.

Of course, neither Sandy nor Diane was thinking all these things quite so coherently while they sat in the restaurant over that awkwardly revealing luncheon. They chatted in a strained manner about their present respective situations in life and the status of other Schaffer grads, mutual friends who were neither particularly friendly nor mentionably mutual any longer; mostly married, or planning to be; or settling down to small-town teaching jobs. Diane even offered a couple of suggestions about folks Sandy ought to see and said she'd put in a good word for her. Diane also invited Sandy to a cocktail party at her apartment the next afternoon, and Sandy said she'd call. They made pleasantries about just *having* to get together some evening and not losing touch now that they were in the same neck of the woods again. It was all painfully superficial like screaming across a river against the wind at a stranger whom each thought she'd recognized but couldn't seem to really communicate with now that the wind had risen and the stream had grown wider and both strangers were farther down from the starting-place. They paid the check and walked out into the whiteness of the concrete sunlight. Diane mumbled something about a three o'clock appointment someplace downtown, and Sandy said she thought she'd go and see one of the gentlemen Diane had recommended.

"Well, be good, gal. Make a good impression on the old boy! Ha, hope he isn't scared by that Southern drawl o' yours."

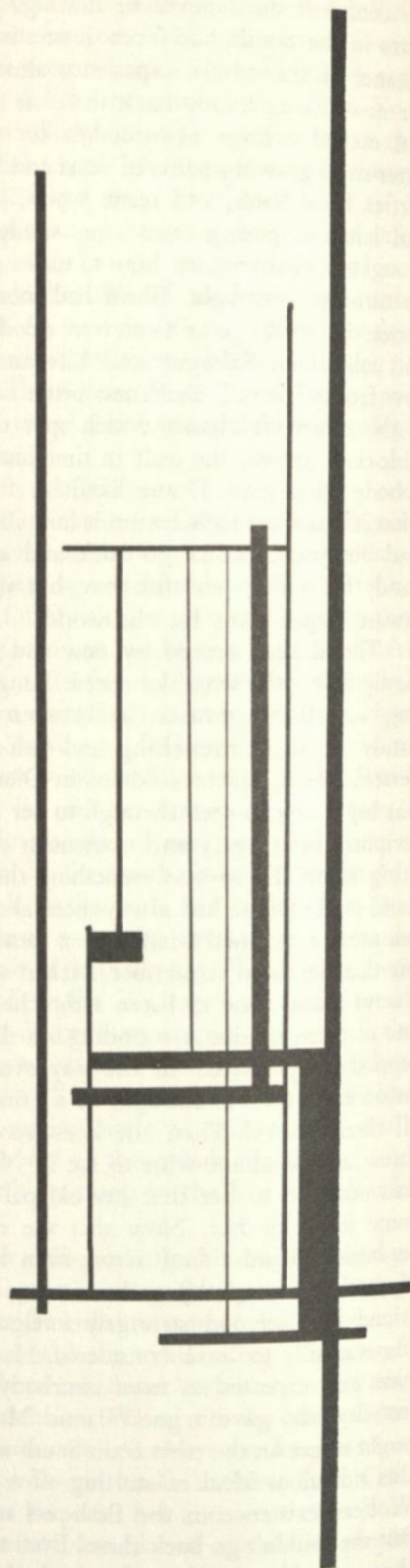
Sandy grinned crookedly at this last comment; Yea, I've been practicing hard to keep from saying, "suh' and 'Ah' and, 'that's mahty nahce o' y'all."

Diane giggled politely and said she guessed she'd better run. "Don't forget to call, now—I want you to meet some of my friends and show them what a real Southern belle is like. I've turned into a pretty good party-thrower lately; you'll have fun." This last was fairly screamed over her shoulder as Diane made off for the subway entrance on the corner behind where they'd been standing. Sandy watched her disappear beneath the pavement then turned to get her bearings and seek out the first address Diane had scribbled inside a matchbook from the restaurant they'd just left.

But Sandy was not thinking any longer of the faceless New Yorkers around her, nor was her mind fixed currently on the important job inter-

views and the necessity of finding a job before starvation crept up and caught her. She knew somewhere in this city there had to be a way for her to exist, even if it meant temporary allegiance with Diane's young cosmopolites. The small security of knowing she might not always be a stranger in this new world was vaguely comforting at this point, for whatever such comfort was worth. As it happened, Diane's publisher friend told Sandy to come back Monday to start a trial period in the copy room, and Sandy was immensely surprised later to remember back on that day and realize how coolly she'd treated the idea of going to work after two-and-a-half-weeks of wandering disappointed and alone. Somehow at the time, though, Sandy's thoughts were elsewhere as she walked out of the publishing house and got a bus over to her room on Ninth Street (which she decided she might be able to keep after all); no, wheels were turning inside her head all right, but these wheels were a lot bigger than the mid-town publishing house, taller than the Empire State Building and wider than George Washington's beautiful bridge. The wheels that were becoming unclogged and beginning to spin slowly inside Sandy shown with a grey, metallic newness of unused machinery, freshly oiled and put into commission, and the glint almost blinded Sandy until she learned to shade her eyes, to look down into the works of the great complex instead of too far up on the surface where the late afternoon sun reflected illusory spectrums. Recently inspected and approved for operation with the degree of Bachelor of Arts, the feminine young mechanism was learning to respond; indeed, although slowly at first, it was now almost past the first crucial mark in proving its workability. Sandy learned something that afternoon; something no course in Philosophy or Psychology or English Lit. back at Schaffer or at any grad school could have poured into a lecture or a textbook and asked back on a quiz. She found out that Diane wasn't the same, but neither was she; she found out that she couldn't go back home again because it wasn't the same, but then neither was she. What a farce was all that wordy advice they'd doled out to her after graduation, before she came to New York! Did they for one minute think she'd believe them? Didn't they know she had to find out for herself, independent young woman than she was? Well at last she was finding out, she guessed, and this fresh glimpse into the Soul of Life filled Sandy with a fearful awe, the end of which she could not see.

—Joy Cochran



STATIC DESIGN NO. 1

—Donna Franklin

—JOHN 8:32—

Yesterday

a greek

and

a god

Today a myth

a christian

and

a god

Tomorrow a myth.

—linda carter



FIGURE DRAWING

—Elizabeth Sims

Sweeping sea shore
Beckoning a host
Of gulls...they tore
Along the rocky coast.

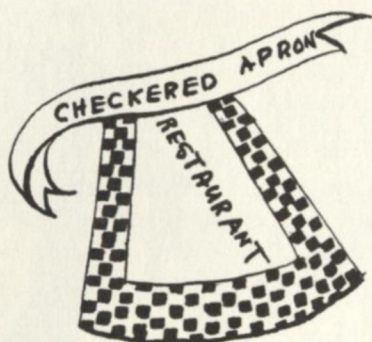
Furious furrows of fog
Blown in gusty gales,
Catching on a log,
Here and there it sails.

Skys begin to gray;
Our gulls catch flight.
That which once was day
Has turned to nearly night.

A silent mist is falling
Along the darkened shore;
A figure now is calling,
Then stillness reigns once
more.

— Linda McRae

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